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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003044

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2017

TAGS: PGOV PTER KDEM PREL MARR I2

SUBJECT: NINEWA: YEZIDI LEADERSHIP FEARS FURTHER TERRORIST ATTACKS; FIRMLY IN KURDISH CAMP

REF: A. 06 BAGHDAD 04017

1B. BAGHDAD 00559

1C. BAGHDAD 01849

1D. BAGHDAD 02154

1E. BAGHDAD 02827

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Jason Hyland: 1.4 (B) and (D).

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

Summary

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11. (C/REL TO ACGU) On August 29, TL Hyland traveled to Ayn Sifni in northeastern Nineva to discuss the political and security situation with Emir Teshin Beg, secular leader of the Yezidi minority, in the wake of the terrorist attacks August 14 on two Yezidi villages (reftels C, D, E). Teshin Beg expressed deep concern about the continued existence of his community. He was very grateful for the relief efforts following the August 14 bombings, reiterating his community's loyalty and gratitude to the United States. He said the immediate needs in the affected communities have been met (ref E). He reiterated again, in private, that Yezidis are Kurds. However, he expressed profound reservations, fearing an Islamist undercurrent among Kurdish officials. TL Hyland urged him to work with Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to improve community security. End Summary.

Annihilation to the South, Assimilation to the North

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12. (C/REL TO ACGU) Even though the security environment in Ayn Sifni is an order of magnitude better than Mosul, Teshin Beg still said he feared an attack by Al-Qaeda, with himself as the number one target. The town is inside the "green line" where Peshmerga and Assiyash patrol the streets and run the checkpoints into town. The markets are well-stocked and people conduct their business with an air of normality. Even so, Teshin Beg said that "Since Islamic State of Iraq issued a religious ruling permitting the killing of Yezidis", his people feel unsafe, including in the villages in the Dahuk province of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). He said, "On one side, the south, they want to kill us, on the other side, the Kurds, they want to change our religion." He spoke direly of limited options of his community either being taken totally under the protection of Coalition Forces, or emigrating en masse.

Qahtaniya Recovering ) Thanks to All

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13. (SBU) In discussing the August 14 bombings, Teshin Beg, and later Yezidi supreme spiritual leader Baba Sheik, expressed gratitude to all - Coalition, UN, local Arabs,

provincial, Kurdish and central governments - for the aid provided to the two Yezidi villages in western Nineva. He said both villages are doing very well economically thanks to the donations and that no more immediate aid was needed. He welcomed the news that the Minister of Environment was heading reconstruction effort at the behest of Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih. Baba Sheik said it was time to focus on rebuilding before winter came and increased the suffering of the affected families. The PRT will continue its coordination efforts.

Article 140 ) "We'll be better under 140."

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¶4. (C/REL TO ACGU) Explicitly and in a private audience in his home, Teshin Beg said that the Yezidis are Kurds but not Muslims and that the religious divide was very significant. (Note: Until recently, Teshin Beg had told the PRT privately that Yezidis were distinct from Kurds (ref B)) He explicitly declared his community's support for joining the KRG through Article 140 saying, "We'll be more secure, if only they didn't want to change our religion." He claimed that the KRG was now implementing a Sunni Kurdish settlement program in traditionally Yezidi-majority areas out of fear that one day the Yezidi would want autonomy. He repeatedly said that, although he had excellent relations with the heads of the Kurdish parties (KDP and PUK), many KDP officials, though party members, were "in their hearts Islamists."

Comment

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¶5. (C/REL TO ACGU) Over the last four years, the Yezidi community, hundreds of thousands strong, has placed its total

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faith in the Coalition: providing translators, full community cooperation and intelligence. The pressure from the radical Islamists has pushed the reluctant Yezidis fully into the Kurdish fold; with the Kurds, the Yezidi fear cultural assimilation. Teshin Beg said without security and cultural guarantees his entire community would have to consider emigrating en masse from Iraq. End Comment.

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